

Esther Turner has been selected as the 2015 Pinal Region First Things First Champion for Young Children.

The award is given to local champions who actively volunteer their time to raise public awareness of the importance of early childhood development and health. Champions spend a significant amount of time volunteering with FTF and building public awareness about the importance of early childhood issues.

Turner has engaged in awareness-raising efforts such as:

- Served on the Board of Directors for Seeds of Hope for four years.
- Serving on the committee that plans the Resource Round Up.
- Volunteered with the local 4H program for the past 12 years, where she started as a parent volunteer, then served as a project leader, club leader and member of several committees.
- Becoming a founding member of the Pinal Early Childhood Coalition and currently serves as the lead for the Health Care Subcommittee. As part of the Coalition, she has been instrumental in helping to create a shared referral form and is leading the Health Care Subcommittee in the creation of a wellness passport for children.



We recently caught up with Turner, who works as a Senior Program Coordinator at the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, Pinal.

Question: Why do you feel early childhood development and health is so important?

Answer: Early childhood development is important because this is when children's brains develop faster than at any other point in their lives, so these early years are critical to receive a quality education, good nutrition and health care. Investing in early childhood development is an investment in our future, by promoting early success for all children.

Q: What caused you to get involved in efforts to increase public awareness of early childhood issues?

A: As a mother of four children, you experience a keen awareness of the lack of educational programs available for parents with young children. First Things First has worked hard to fill that need, so now, more than ever, it is important to make the community aware of all the resources available to them.

Q: Why do you feel building awareness in early childhood and developmental health is so important for families and communities?

A: Parents are getting more involved in what their children are doing. They realize that they are their child's first and best teacher. It is exciting to see more families getting involved in available programs.

Q: How have you seen awareness for the early years change in your community?

A: Parents are getting more involved in what their children are doing. They realize that they are their child's first and best teacher. It is exciting to see more families getting involved in available programs.

Q: How do you suggest other people in your community get involved?

A: I do not want to go Nike on you, but “Just Do It.” Take the opportunity to spend time with YOUR children, ANY CHILDREN. Visit a Head Start and volunteer, coach a sports team and provide a positive role model for children, pack lunches for children who do not have lunches, read a book to a child, support organizations that focus on opportunities for young children, continue to have hope for the future and pray for our children.

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About First Things First – First Things First is a voter-created, statewide organization that funds early education and health programs to help kids be successful once they enter kindergarten. Decisions about how those funds are spent are made by local councils staffed by community volunteers. To learn more, visit azftf.gov.